

Does He Make You Happy?

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Does He Make You Happy?

by [its_brilliant_thor](#)

Summary

Miles' boyfriend sucks. Hobie could do way better.

Chapter 1

Hobie's not expecting to hear sniffing when he portals to Miles' universe. It makes him stand at alert, surveying the scene. This roof is taller than all the others around it, probably nearing a thousand feet in the air, high enough that the air is a little thinner. Miles' feet are dangling over the edge and his mask is pulled up to his forehead. His lean shoulders are hunched, his back bowed.

Hobie murmurs, "Mate? You alright?"

Miles flinches and quickly rubs his face with his fist. "Y-Yeah. I'm good, man." He throws a half-hearted smile over his shoulder. "Thanks."

Hobie carefully walks forward. "You've been a bit off, yeah? And disappearing faster from HQ."

Miles shakes his head as Hobie sits next to him. "You noticed."

"Of course I did." Hobie says, looking him over. His eyes are puffy and reddened, face all wet. So he's been crying for a while. And a quick glance over his body doesn't tip him off of any injuries from patrol. "Nightmares again?"

"No, no, it's..." Miles half-laughs, half-sobs, slouched and holding his own forearms. "It's stupid, really. Not even spider-related."

"Not stupid then." Hobie drapes his arm over Miles' slim shoulders, appreciating once again the way he fits right in his arm. "Come on, out with it."

"It's..." Miles chokes up, big brown eyes glistening again. Hobie has to strain to hear. "It's... a guy I'm... seeing."

Hobie stiffens, two things hitting him at once. One, he suspected Miles swung that way but it's nice to have some confirmation. Maybe his crush won't be so unrequited after all. Two—

"He broke your heart?"

It comes out like he's pissed off. He didn't mean it to. But Miles flinches again and slightly turns his shoulders the other way. "It— we— it was my fault—"

"*Your* fault?" Hobie laughs, dry. "Right. What'd he do?"

"Hobie."

"Miles."

"You're making it a big deal."

"You're crying, love, I'd call that a big deal."

Miles tenses up next to him and looks up at Hobie with a sharp, questioning glance.

Ah, shit. Well, too late to take it back. Not like he'd want to. Still, Hobie carefully lets go of Miles.

"If he's making you cry then he ain't the one for you, right? It's simple. Drop him and move on."

"I... well it's my first time with... well. You know? I just thought it'd be..." Miles shakes his head. "I'm not making any sense, am I?"

"Sure you are. But here, I'll ask a few simple questions that ought to clear things up." He lifts a finger. "One. Does he make you happy?"

Miles' mouth opens and shuts.

Hobie continues before he can lie, lifting more fingers. "Does he listen to you? Does he make you feel important? Any similarities? Does he support you? Does he know what you truly enjoy?" He finds his own voice rising. "Why're you with him? Do you even get along?"

"We get along fine," Miles snaps with a harsh glare.

Hobie goes quiet. Shit. Too far.

Miles drags a hand down his face with a groan. "Sorry."

"No harm done." It comes out colder than he means to.

"No, man, I'm serious." Miles turns his head and rests it on Hobie's shoulder, hiding his face. Hobie looks down at him. "You're just looking out for me."

"Yeah, mate. Always."

Miles pulls back to look at him with a smile that doesn't reach his eyes. "What about you, huh? Seeing anyone?"

Hobie scoffs as he unclips his guitar and leans back flat on the roof with his hands behind his head, staring up at the healthy blue sky. The clouds are moving like snails. "I haven't exactly got people lining up."

Miles looms over him, leaning in a bit and smiling down at him like he's endearing. Which is odd; he's never been described that way. "What? That's crazy talk."

"It all ends the same. I can't be molded." His nose wrinkles as he spits, "Fixed."

"You shouldn't be. No one should."

Hobie's heart lurches the way it does when someone gets it.

Miles shrugs under Hobie's sudden scrutiny. "It's true. If you're being authentically you and they hate it, then they're the one who's gotta go."

Hobie grins, and Miles' serene look fades to dread. "On that note, may I say something?"

Miles pushes his face back into his hands with a groan. "Yeah, let's hear it. Go ahead and throw my words back at me."

Hobie looks him in the eye and speaks his mind. "He's missing out on the real you. Don't let him

get to you, love, you're stunning. Really. A vision." He reaches up and gently tug Miles' hands away from his face, watching a lovely blush form. "And you're talented at everything you do. An artist's heart. Untamed."

Miles looks embarrassed. Pleased, as if he doesn't receive enough praise, but embarrassed. "I don't know about all that."

"I do."

Miles smiles to himself, a real one, and sits up straighter. There we go. "Thanks, Hobie." He's looking down at the drop below with new interest.

Yeah, he's right. It'd be a shame to waste such a beautiful fall. So Hobie gets to his feet and secures his guitar.

A second later, Miles is on his feet and bouncing on his toes. He says, fiddling with his web shooter, "You remember where that 7/11 is? The one I showed you?"

Not too far, around a five minute journey.

Hobie nudges his shoulder. "I'll race you."

Miles nudges him back, looking up at him with a fucking brilliant smile. "Cool. When I win, you buy me an empanada." Then he backflips off the edge with a familiar, free cry.

Hobie steals a moment to watch Miles flip and tumble through the air like a barrel of light, charging towards the ground at a fatal speed and *laughing*. Bathed in the sun and shining in graffiti.

What a beauty.

Said beauty flips around and reaches out his hand as if Hobie could catch his wrist from that far down. He yells at the top of his lungs, "Come on, man, I'm gonna win!"

Hobie turns around, closes his eyes and raises a leg as he lets himself tip backwards over the edge. The air roars in his ears, a familiar scream. Then he flips around and reaches out for Miles.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

warning: extremely dubious consent

take care of yourselves everyone

Bored one night around a week later, Hobie climbs through Miles' bedroom window in his normal clothes and notices three things.

One, Miles' boyfriend is, unfortunately, hot. Two, they're making out on his bed. Three, Miles is unnaturally stiff, with his back against the wall and his hand gripping the comforter too tightly. His breath is coming fast, the way it does when he's trying not to turn invisible.

And four, when the guy pulls back to see who's intruding, Miles looks at Hobie like he's relieved as all hell to see him.

The guy looks him up and down and puffs up with a frown. He seems to be the same height as Miles, but a bit thicker all around. His hair is in drop fade with cornrows in a top knot. "Who are you?" Then he looks behind Hobie. "And what the fuck are you doing, climbing through my boyfriend's window?"

Hobie crosses the room in long strides. The guy scrambles to get into a better defensive position. "Funny, I was just about to throw you out of it."

"Wha— Hey!"

He grabs the guy by the undershirt and hauls him off the bed and onto his feet. Miles breathes like it's the freshest air on earth. Hobie snaps, "Get out."

Undershirt goes for a punch, one that Hobie catches, then sends his own lightning quick punch across his jaw. Undershirt hits the floor and curses, slurred, "Son of a *bitch*, my tooth cracked!"

"Good," Hobie says, standing over him, practically vibrating. He lifts his foot for a swift kick to his side.

"Hobie, wait—"

Hobie looks, expecting Miles to be horrified by now. He's not expecting Miles to still be looking at him with adoration, like he's godsent. So he lowers his foot to keep Miles happy and stuffs his hands in the pockets of his vest to hide their twitching.

Miles rises from the bed and schools his expression into something more apologetic as Undershirt struggles to get to his feet. "You've gotta go, Santi. I'm sorry."

Undershirt is scowling. "Go? It was just getting good."

Miles takes a half-step back, and his voice takes on the light quality he uses when calming down an angry civilian. “I know, I know, but...” He nervously glances at Hobie, who nods his encouragement. “I forgot we have got a project to work on. For AP Art and Design.”

“Then why’d he punch me?” Undershirt whirls towards Hobie. Look at that; there are piercings in his right brow and both ears. And his lip. “Why’d you punch me, huh? You like him or something?”

Hobie doesn’t deny it. He looks him in the eye with a dangerous, violence-seeking grin. Undershirt’s eyes widen.

“Santi,” Miles snaps, pointing to the window with a fire in his eyes. “Out.”

Music to Hobie’s ears.

It’s entertaining watching him wrestle with his pride. Hating to take orders, and yet sizing Hobie up and finding unfavorable odds.

So he yanks Miles close by the waist and kisses him hard. Uncomfortably. This time Miles does flicker invisible, but Undershirt’s eyes are squeezed shut like he’s trying to commit this to memory.

It drags on a little too long. Clearly a statement. Clearly a stupid, entitled claim where the other party doesn’t feel the same way and it makes Hobie want to bash his head in with a guitar. His fingers twitch again.

Miles is squirming now, trying to politely push him away. He’s too fucking nice. When it, of course, doesn’t work, Miles pushes harder.

Undershirt doesn’t let up; he tries to deepen it.

Hobie takes a step forward but Miles shoves Undershirt back with a little unnerved gasp, and enough sudden force that the guy stumbles. Miles clears his throat and quickly picks up a foreign shirt from the ground. His hand is shaking. “S-Sorry. Here.”

Undershirt is looking him up and down with genuine surprise. “You been working out or something?”

Miles holds the shirt higher, offering again.

Undershirt snaps, “The one time your parents aren’t here—”

“I know.”

He snatches the shirt with another glare and shoves it on. “You owe me.”

He doesn’t owe you jack shit.

“Yeah, okay,” Miles says, looking guilty and Hobie kind of wants to burn this whole place to the ground.

To occupy his hands, Hobie picks up an unfamiliar jacket from the ground and throws it at Undershirt’s head. Undershirt catches it and shoulder-checks him on the way to the window.

But when he reaches it, he pauses and looks back at Miles. Miles takes another step back, still with that panic in his eyes. If Undershirt sees his discomfort, he pays it no mind, instead saying, “See you soon.” Then he finally climbs out the window.

As soon as the jerk is gone— and Hobie makes *sure*, watching him climb down the fire escape and walk into the night— he slams the window shut and whirls around. “That guy? Really?”

Miles is invisible. But a small Spider-Man figurine is in his fingers, floating, and a bunch of clothes and papers and markers on his desk are shoved aside. He must be sitting on it. “Sorry you had to see that.”

Hobie scoffs and sits on the edge of his bed, stretching his legs in front of him. “Sorry you had to experience that. You okay?”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m good.” The figurine is tossed in the air and caught. His voice is dull. “I’m good.”

Hobie sighs. “You asking me to point out the obvious, mate?”

“I just— I *like* being invisible, you know?”

“It’s harassment if you haven’t consented.”

“I did consent!” Miles’ voice has gone a little squeaky. “We’re dating, so, that’s that.”

“Did you two talk about it? Physical boundaries and all that?”

“That’s— you’re asking too many questions.”

“I asked one.”

“Still, it’s a lot.”

Hobie lifts his hands in surrender.

Miles sighs and leans back against the wall, crinkling the posters behind him. “Why is this so hard?”

It doesn’t need to be. “Curse of being a teenager and all that.”

Miles is silent. Hobie lets it be.

Then a minute passes, and then two minutes, and well that’s a new record for Miles. Silent and invisible. Something bad is happening.

Hobie looks at him— or, where he thinks he is— and quietly asks, “Do you need me to leave?”

Silence.

Hobie gently reminds him, “I can’t see if you’re nodding or shaking your head—”

“Don’t go.” Miles’ voice cracks. “Did you— um. Did you mean it when you... when you called

me... on the roof you called me..."

"Yes." He can't say it fast enough. "I meant it, Miles."

There's another long silence.

Hobie stares into the empty space like he can will Miles back into existence. "Can I come closer?"

Miles is quiet for a little longer. Then he croaks, "You don't gotta ask, Hobie."

Hobie gets up and slowly crosses the room, letting his heavy boots do all the work of announcing himself. He takes a chance on where Miles' face is and reaches out. Sure enough, he's holding Miles' cheek. Score. Miles seems to lean into it as Hobie runs his thumb along his soft skin, in what he hopes is a soothing gesture. He murmurs, "Can you please look at me?"

Miles sounds like he's choking. "I am."

He's not. "Miles."

Long, slow seconds pass. Then Miles gradually re-appears, sitting on the desk. Sure enough, he's looking down at his lap with tears of shame in his eyes. His face is still tinted red. "I-I just wish you didn't have to see—" A sob interrupts him and he covers his mouth.

Hobie leans closer, watching each tear slide down his cheeks, needing him to understand. "*Forget* about me, Miles, what matters more is that it happened to you."

Miles gives a stiff nod. It's not convincing.

He wants to hold Miles in his arms until he feels safe again. He wants to find Undershirt and beat him until he can't stand. Instead he wipes Miles tears with his thumb. "Has he done that before?"

Miles shrugs. Another not-answer.

"That wasn't cool what he just did. Alright? You're not weak for wanting him to ask permission."

"I'm Spider-Man, I could've..." Miles shakes his head, toying with his figurine. Running his finger along the red spider insignia on the dark suit. "...electrocuted him or something."

"That's not the point. And you wouldn't electrocute your boyfriend. Well." Hobie winks. "Unless he asked."

Miles stares up at him in earnest, like a question is crowding his mind and resting on the tip of his tongue.

Hobie expectantly tilts his head. Waiting.

Miles' mouth opens and shuts. Then he blurts, caving into himself again. "Thanks for kicking him out. I couldn't... find it in me."

"You're welcome. Anytime." He chuckles to himself. "I'm thrilled to, honestly."

He starts to take his hand back but Miles snatches his wrist. It surprises both of them. Miles still

looks like he wants to spit something out. “I— um...”

Hobie waits.

“This is nice,” Miles says, the red tint to his face darkening. He’s tensing up again, but not nearly as bad as when he was with Undershirt. “Right? Am I... right?”

Hobie says, pushing, “Any time I spend with you is nice, love.”

Come on, Miles, take the leap. Ask.

Miles blurts, wiping the last of the tears from his eyes, “Are you hitting on me?”

Hobie grins. His heart beats faster with adrenaline. Of course, this could all go wrong. But he has a feeling it’s about to go very, very right. “About time you noticed.”

“Why’re *you* hitting on *me*?”

“Because you are sensational.”

“Hobie, come on, you’re,” Miles laughs, looking anywhere but at him. “You’re... wow. I mean I can’t— you shouldn’t like me.”

“Don’t tell me what to do.” Hobie shoves his shoulder. “I’ll just do the opposite. And we need to work on your confidence, love.”

Miles’ gaze snaps to him like he threw down a gauntlet. Oh. “I’ve got confidence.”

“Oh yeah?”

Miles gets to his feet, holding himself sure. Adapting beautifully as usual. There’s a teasing light in his eyes as he says, “He was an awful kisser.”

“Looked it.”

“Let’s hope you’re better.”

Then he rises on his toes and pulls Hobie down by the neck with too much strength. Hobie’s heart flutters and he stops him by the chest with strength of his own. “Wait, wait. Are you sure? You know, we don’t have to—”

Miles holds his chin and kisses him.

Hobie pulls back even though it nearly kills him. He needs to make sure. “Miles, seriously, we don’t need to—”

Miles looks a little dazed. “I’m sure, I’m—” He leans up again and kisses him, then says against his mouth, “I’ve wanted, I’ve—” he pants, then groans and kisses Hobie again like he needs it to breathe.

Shit, okay then.

Hobie deepens it, cradling his jaw with both hands, their mouths falling open in tandem and it turns out that Miles is a divine kisser when he isn't rushed.

By the time they part, Miles is glowing. Despite the radiance, and the way he's breathing like he just jumped from a skyscraper, he shrugs and sits on the desk again. "I'd give you a six out of ten."

Hobie raises a brow. Then he crowds Miles' space and pulls him by the waist as he kisses him again, taking his thrilled laugh straight from the source.

Chapter 3

Miles is off his game today.

He hasn't heard from Hobie in a week. A *week*. After that night, when he was finally able to hold Hobie the way he's daydreamed about, and nothing more happened than hours of holding and kissing each other, simply because that's all he really asked for and Hobie *obliged like it was okay*. Like he was normal. Not a killjoy, or a prude, or *un aguafiestas*. Hobie let Miles drag him to the bed, and let Miles straddle him and let Miles' hands wander without complaints, seemingly grateful for anything Miles was willing to give.

He slept like a baby that night, with Hobie pressed against his back and his arm wrapped tight around Miles' front. But these past nights since have been... rough. Cold. Somehow, he's more lonely than he was before he started trying things out with Santi.

Despite Santi's best efforts.

Miles hasn't had the heart to block him but part of him wishes he did, what with all the late night texts and calls he's been getting from his boyfriend. Avoiding him in school has been hell.

Stuck between Santi's obsession and Hobie's silence, this week has done horrors for his sleep schedule.

Gwen yells from up ahead, "Miles, look out!"

"Wha—" He hits the side of an apartment building, just below the roof he was aiming for. Ow.

Pav doubles back and swings toward him. "Miles! Are you okay?"

"Fine, m'fine!" He shakes his head like a dog, trying to clear the foggy edges of his vision. He invited them here to hang out with him on patrol, not to stress out about him.

Even though Hobie isn't here yet. When he said he would be. Maybe Miles scared him off. But that doesn't make any sense, considering how things ended the next morning.

"Thank you for a wonderful night, love," Hobie says, and kisses the back of Miles' hand like a fairytale prince. His portal is pulsing behind him.

Miles yanks his hand back with his heart in his throat. Flushing hot. "Dude."

Hobie laughs, deep and rich. "See you soon." Then he kisses Miles properly and leaps through the portal.

It disappears. Clothes and books and shoes hit the floor. Miles stares at where the portal was and holds the back of his own hand.

Unless Hobie was lying about it all.

Which... is a super depressing thought, actually.

Miles jumps as Pav lands next to him in a crouch on the side of the building. “What’s gotten into you, bro? That’s the second time, you’re normally way cooler than this.”

“Nothing, nothing, I’m fine, everything’s fine. Oh look!” He points at a thief running up the street below, clutching a purse. “Crime! I’ve gotta—”

“Nope.” Gwen shoots a web and flings herself after the sprinting woman like an arrow. Dang it. “Talk!”

“Seriously, bro, Gwen and I were talking and we agreed that something is *definitely* up with you. And Hobie too.”

“Hobie?” Miles perks up. “I haven’t heard from him. Is he okay? What’d he say? Did he say something about me— or anyone! I mean,” he clears his throat. “Is he okay?”

Pav’s eyes are slowly growing wide.

Miles frantically waves his hand. “Wait, wait, shh, no, *no Pav*—”

“Gwen, I know the problem with Miles!” Pav yells at the top of his lungs and dives after her.

“Pav! Pav, wait!” Miles dives too, giving into the thief chase. “Pav, please!”

A familiar portal opens, chaotic and abstract with flashing pastels and newspaper clippings. Miles’ breath catches as Hobie flies through with a victory cry. The spikes on his mask and the skulls on his belt glint in the sunlight. He flips and strikes a pose like the world is watching, then shoots another web.

“Hobie!” Pav swings towards him and releases, flying free in the air and they share a high-five. “My guy!”

Gwen yells as she shoots a web at the thief’s back and yanks, “*Miles, pay attention—*”

He hits another building. His body is really starting to complain about it, limbs aching and head ringing. He turns on his back, the brick cool and grounding, and catches the breath that was knocked out of him.

Pav sings, “Building number three.”

“Three?” Hobie yells, “Miles, you good?”

Miles gives a thumbs up.

“Not convincing!”

“I’m doing great!” He lets himself fall forward off the wall, diving headfirst for the street before shooting a web and curving up again. He manages to do a quadruple backflip Gwen once showed him, stomach floating, and then shoots another line.

He can show off too.

“Oh, that reminds me!” Pav appears next to him. They swing in unison, while flipping over lampposts and billboards. *Thwip, release. Thwip, release.* “Gwen, Miles is in love! And not with you!”

“Pav!” Miles tries to slap him but he ducks with a laugh.

“With who?” Hobie asks, swinging through them like bowling pins and sending them into tailspins.

“Hobie!” Miles yelps, struggling to right his direction.

“Exactly!” Pav cries as he gives up on untwisting himself and shoots a new line instead. “Gwen, did you hear?”

The thief is cocooned in a web on the sidewalk. She hands the purse back to the young man, then turns with a hand on her hip and looks up at them. “Yep.”

“No, I-I never said I was in love with him— with anyone. Anyone.”

Hobie appears next to him, swinging in time. His voice is lowered just for him. “No shame if we like each other, right?”

“Oh, yep, uh yeah. Hi.” Miles stares at him, taking in the details. Itching for a pen and paper. Lately his sketchbook is full of Hobie. And if there’s a wall deep in the subway caverns with Spider Punk drawn in all his glory, well, that’s his business. *I missed you. I was so lonely. Where have you been?* “How’re you doing?”

“S’crazy in my ‘verse, otherwise I would’ve stopped by.” Hobie knocks Miles’ shoulder with the back of his hand. “Lotta uprising. Love it.”

“I could’ve helped.”

“You’re distracting, love. Needed to keep my head on straight for life or death shit, you know? But hey.” On the release of their webs, flying free in a high arc, Hobie pulls slightly ahead to turn and face Miles. It feels like the world’s in slow motion. “Promise I’ll make it up to you. Today, I’m all yours, alright?”

Miles nods like he’s in a trance and asks, “The whole day?”

It sounds like Hobie’s smiling. “You got it, love.”

Miles’ spider sense goes off at the same time his other five senses kick back in. There’s a roaring train flying over a bridge, loud and obvious and he snaps himself up, landing solidly in a crouch on the speeding train. The wind rushes against his mask. His head is spinning and he’s not sure if it’s from a concussion or Hobie’s presence.

A breather wouldn’t hurt.

He lies flat on his back with a quiet sigh, watching Hobie swing high above him, keeping pace with the train.

Then Gwen and Pav join him in the air, her teal feet perfectly arched and his golden bangle spinning like mad. He wishes he had his sketchbook. Again.

“So, like, how long has this been a thing?” Gwen asks, and then flips.

“It’s cute, you guys,” Pav says.

Hobie says instead, “Since we’re all here, I have a little something I’ve been working on for months.”

Pav perks up. “Oh, show us!”

Hobie reaches into his pocket and pulls out four phones. One black, one teal, one gold, and one red.

Gwen gasps and snatches the teal one. “Are these—”

“—cross dimensional phones?” Miles sits up from his perch. He claps his hands and raises his arm. “Throw one here!”

Hobie tosses him the red one. The train shoots by it but Miles snatches it back with a well-aimed web. “Now we can keep up with each other.”

The red matches his own flawlessly. There’s a camera on the back, with a tiny sunflower imprinted next to it. The casing is hard as rock; probably indestructible.

“You made these?” Pav asks, typing away on the gold one already with one hand.

“Margo helped.”

Gwen asks, “And it’ll work when we go home?”

Pav scoffs. “Of course it will! They’re geniuses.”

Miles watches Hobie move through the air, long limbs spread. Every release of the web he strikes a pose from his endless arsenal. Like he’s used to being in front of a crowd. Miles looks from his phone, to Hobie, then back at his phone. If he could just take one reference photo—

Three sets of webs shoot his chest and pin Miles flat just before the train is swallowed by a tunnel. Saving his life. Whoops.

The ceiling is close enough to touch with his fingertips. It’s cool in here, and quiet, with the electric blue light of the humming train bathing the smooth walls.

He lifts his phone over his face and turns it on. There’s a loading screen, with an animation of a little swinging Spider-Man. Cute.

Calibrating...

Calibrating...

EARTH-1610

BROOKLYN.

Hello, sunflower.

The menu opens. There's two texts. Four. Five. Seven. He smiles and opens the messages app.

Pav: hello is it working

Pav: helloooo

Gwendy: Hobie you madlad

Hobes: I aim to please

Pav: this

Pav: is

Pav: so

Pav: COOL

sunflower: ^^

sunflower: wait

Gwendy: LOLLL someone has a preference

Pav: oooo I love the name, miles

Pav: ur welcome for saving your life!!

Pav: :)

Gwendy: yeah that was too close dude

Hobes: I can change the name if you don't like it, Miles

sunflower: no no it's good don't worry

The train shoots out the tunnel and the sun blinds him. His eyes are still adjusting when three pairs of feet land around him. They crouch, blocking out the sun, masks pulled back and faces all concerned. The sight of them all here, for the first time in weeks, tugs at his heart and heals some of the crippling loneliness from the past week.

"Hey, guys," he says, with a weak pair of finger guns before his head gives a valiant ache and he hisses in pain.

"You are not okay," Gwen says as she pulls the webs off him. Then she takes his hand and helps him sit up. Her eyes are crystalline in the sunlight and she's wearing a half-smile now. "Let's call it a day, alright?"

"No, no, I'm fine, I swear I—" He cuts off with a sharp hiss as soon as he's upright, from another stab of pain through his temples. He pitches backwards but Hobie catches him with a wide hand on his back. God, the pain is really starting to catch up with him.

"Alright. I've got you, love," Hobie murmurs. "Take a minute and heal."

Miles shivers. Has his voice always been so deep?

Pav is turning giddy again. "Can we please talk about this?" He points back and forth between Hobie and Miles, then shakes Hobie's shoulder. "Tell me everything! How long have you guys been together and not told us? Us!"

"Does Peter know?" Gwen demands. "Before me?"

“If it’s been months then I’m stringing you from this train. It’s not nice to keep things from your closest, bestest friends.”

“Does Miguel know?”

“Fuck Miguel,” Hobie says emphatically.

“You’re right, he’s not important.” Pav waves a hand. “Does Peter know?”

They should do something non-spider related. Something stress-free. They all deserve it and more. Miles blurts the first thing that comes to mind. “Anyone up for burgers?”

The diner is pretty busy, with people filtering in and out every few minutes. The bell above the door keeps jingling. They’re outside, at a table for four. Gwen is sitting next to Miles with her knee up on the table. Across from her, Pav is sitting in a criss-cross applesauce designed for flexible people. Next to him, Hobie’s legs are stretched out and colliding with Miles’ under the table. One of his long arms is thrown behind his chair. They’ve changed back into civilian-wear, using the overnight packs stowed away in each of their universes.

Between their combined metabolism they’ve worked up quite a bill. The complete order ended up being four plastic trays of food crowding their little table, buffet style. By now it’s a mess of leftovers. A couple burgers, chicken sandwiches, fries, and four different large sodas down to their dregs. Random chicken nuggets boxes are scattered with a few left in each. Three salads, bought at Gwen’s insistence, are nearly finished.

“This was my best idea ever,” Miles says, slouched with Hobie’s vest over his eyes to block out some of the light. His head still throbs but the food is speeding up his healing. One arm is thrown over his full stomach and in his other hand is the rest of his second burger. He’ll finish it. He just needs to collect the willpower.

“Agreed,” Pav says, the place in front of him littered with fries and the pickles removed from his chicken sandwich. “Next time can we meet in my universe? I’ll cook.”

Miles perks up. “Hell, yeah.”

The door to the diner opens again with a cheery ring. They’ve gotten used to it by now.

But Hobie whistles, quietly but sharp enough to earn their attention. They all look.

No way.

This was his worst idea ever.

Miles lowers the vest back over his face as Hobie announces to the table, “That there is Miles’ current boyfriend. One who does not respect his boundaries. Right, Miles?”

Santi is relaxed and alone, walking to a table with his tray of food. He didn’t seem to notice them.

Pav and Gwen are silent.

Maybe if Miles doesn't react—

Gwen rips the vest off his eyes. He winces at the sudden light, blinking through it. Both Pav and Gwen are looking at him, worried all over again.

Miles gives a single, miserable nod. "He's... pushy."

Gwen snaps, "Has he forced you?"

"Woah," Miles holds out a placating hand, looking around. "Not so loud."

Pav's nose is wrinkled. His voice is harder than usual. "That is not the most encouraging answer."

"No he hasn't—"

Hobie coughs.

"...not really. He hasn't really *forced* me into anything. Uh. We were..." He feels a little sick now. Remembering those uncomfortable lips on him, pushing him against his own wall. Ruining his safe space. "I didn't... stop him."

"It's not your fault," Hobie says. "Luckily I was there, so I knocked him down and threw him out."

Gwen says, "Damn, I wish I could've done it."

Pav looks at Miles. "What's his name?"

Miles sighs. "Santi."

Pav glares harder as his boyfriend begins eating. "*Santi*." He says it like it's poisonous; coated in venom. "Look at him. With his... jawline and stupid face. And he's ordered a burger and a milkshake. How shallow. He has nothing on Hobie."

Gwen nods along, glaring at him too while sipping from the group Sprite.

"Thanks, mate." Hobie lightly punches his shoulder, then looks across the table expectantly at Miles.

Miles takes a huge bite of his burger.

"What's the big deal, *cariño*, just break up with him."

Miles nearly chokes, heat rushing to his face. "I told you not to call me that!"

"But it makes you turn red so fast," Hobie chuckles. "How can I not? Listen, Miles, the sooner you do this, the sooner you'll be happier."

Miles hesitantly looks at him. "You think?"

"I know. Trust me."

Gwen says, "Definitely. Time to cut that bitch off."

Pav says, "Like a bad leg."

Miles slowly nods. "Right." He glances at Santi and winces. "So do I just go up to him? That seems kind of rude, I mean he's eating lunch."

Hobie scoffs. "He was more than rude first."

"Still."

Gwen bursts out laughing, startling all of them. "Oh, *Miles*, you're hilarious!" She leans into him, holding the back of his chair. Then she kicks Pav with an urgent look.

Pav lights up and starts laughing too. "What a delight our best friend *Miles* is!"

"The best! Miles is absolutely the best!"

"Not. Subtle," Miles mutters, trying to hide behind his menu.

But Hobie reaches across the table and pulls down his menu, leaning in. And curse him, even this makes Miles fidget. "I'm whispering quietly so he thinks we're flirting."

Miles wants to die. "I got that, yeah."

Hobie keeps looking him right in the eye. "You're fucking hot, darling."

Miles does blush then. He can't help it. "Hobie!" He glances at Santi and winces. His boyfriend is looking right at him, none too pleased. He sets his burger down and starts marching over. Miles hisses, "He's coming."

"Good."

He looks at Hobie again for strength. "I'm gonna do it."

There's no doubt in Hobie's eyes. "Yeah you are."

Pav whispers beneath his grand smile, "Should I be rude? Or should I be overly nice to the point where it's uncomfortable and overwhelming?"

Gwen reaches over to steal a couple of Miles' fries. "Just make sure he feels like we're more important than him. Looks like he'll hate that."

Beneath the table, Hobie's foot rests against his own, and he sends Miles an encouraging glance similar to the one he gave that night before Santi was thrown out. It's nice Hobie has so much faith in him. Maybe misguided, but... nice.

Santi stops at their table and sends a long look at each of them one by one, then focuses on Miles. "*Te mandé mensajes toda la semana. Porque no contestas?*"

Miles winces, sinking in his seat. "Uh... well I, uh, got a new phone."

"No, you haven't. You've had the same one all week at school, I've seen it. *No me mientas.*"

Miles falls quiet. He really should've spent this week coming up with excuses. Instead his sketchbook is full of Hobie.

Santi snaps, "*Estás sordo?* Hello?"

"Hello!" Pav says, with a wide smile that offsets the fury in his eyes, "Who're you? We've never

heard of you. At all.”

Santi sends a final glare at Miles, then looks at each of them. “Miles’ boyfriend. I’m his boyfriend.”

“Congrats,” Hobie says, slouched back again and looking up at the ceiling. “You suck at this.”

Miles kicks him under the table but he doesn’t flinch.

Santi looks at Hobie. “I remember you.”

“I’m surprised. You hit the floor pretty hard.”

Pav snorts.

Santi is scowling harder now. “You’ve got a problem, dude.” Then he looks around at all of them again. “Miles said you’ve all got a class together but I swear to Christ I’ve never seen any of you at Visions before. Well, except you.” He looks at Gwen. “Briefly. Couldn’t keep up?”

Gwen’s face darkens. Miles quickly speaks up before she verbally eviscerates him. “Why’re you here, Santi?”

Santi looks at him. It’s a loaded look. He wants something. “Because I wanted to say hi.”

Miles says, “I’m sorry, but I don’t believe that.”

“Fine. You’re here, you’re clearly not busy, so let’s get out of here.”

“Clearly not busy?” Miles gestures to his friends. “What part of this isn’t busy to you?”

Santi says, “You know what I mean.”

Fuck. He needs to shut up. Glaring at him, Miles says slowly through gritted teeth, “I really don’t.”

Santi leans in too. “You’re always *busy* with something when I ask to *hang out*.”

His palms lie flat on the table. “Santi.” Not here. Not in front of them. Hobie watches Miles, dark eyes alert the way they get when he tastes an incoming fight.

“With homework—”

“Santi—”

“—or studying—”

“—I swear—”

“—or your parents are home or you’re drawing and you’re *in the zone*, Santi, *not tonight*—”

“Santi!”

Gwen grits, arms still crossed and her leg bouncing beneath the table, “Dude.”

“Well now you’re out, which means you’ve either finished your work or don’t care about it, which is all fine with me so let’s just—”

Miles stands up and looks him in the eye. “No! It is a *no*. And this is kind of ridiculous, it’s the

middle of the day!”

“Excuse me if you’ve forced my hand! A man has needs.”

“Well, take your needs elsewhere.” It’s easy now. He raises his voice. “I want to break up.”

“No.”

Miles gapes. “Excuse me?”

Santi crosses his arms. “You owe me. You promised.”

“Why do you want to get in my pants so badly? It’s weird, dude. Back off.”

“Or what?”

“Or I’ll beat your ass.”

Pav spits out his drink. Hobie looks delighted, with his new phone up recording. Gwen has her arms crossed. The tables around them have gone silent, with a few people recording as eagerly as Hobie.

“You wouldn’t.”

“I would.” Miles steps forward and grins as Santi reflexively stepping back. Whatever expression he’s wearing is enough to keep his ex wary. Good. “Don’t bother me again.”

Santi glares at Hobie now. “Why the fuck are you recording?”

Hobie says, snickering, “Careful what you say to me, mate, he’s about to murder you.”

“*Mate?* Where are you even from?” Santi gestures wildly at all of them. “Where did *all of you come from?*”

Gwen snickers and covers her mouth.

Santi’s gaze snaps to her. His eye is twitching. “Oh you think that’s funny?”

“I do, yeah,” Gwen says, “Who’re you? Like Pav said, we’ve never heard of you. Once.”

“You fucking bitch—”

Miles grabs the back of Santi’s head and slams his face into the table. It clatters. Santi drops with a sharp cry, hitting his knees and holding his nose. It’s bleeding. He spits out half a tooth; guess he never got the crack fixed.

Miles says, shaking his hand out, “Your face is screwed at this point, man. Pick your battles.”

To his pleasure, Santi lunges at him. Miles steps aside, grabs his arm and twists it backwards.

Santi howls.

Miles smiles and wrenches it harder. The bone creaks like a toothpick. “Well?”

“*Hijo de puta*, alright, *alright*, let go—”

Miles smacks him. “Don’t talk about my mother.”

“S-Sorry—”

“Apologize to Gwen.”

“I’m sorry I’m *sorry!*” Tears slide down his cheeks, staring at Gwen. She looks unimpressed. “I said I’m sorry, man, fuck fuck—”

“Apologize to Hobie too.”

Santi pants, sweating now with a vile glare, “I’m not apologizing to that freak—” Santi screams again as Miles fractures his arm.

“Watch it.”

Hobie looks at Miles like he wants to kiss him. Miles allows himself a little smirk in return, but juts his chin at Santi. *Focus.*

Hobie focuses, resting his chin on his hand. “I’m waiting.”

“Fuck *you.*”

Hobie pouts at Miles. Miles grips the back of Santi’s head with his free hand and says, “Don’t make me smash your face again. I hope you’ve got insurance, ‘cause—”

“I’m sorry,” Santi spits. “Hobie. Right? I’m sorry.”

Miles looks at Hobie. *Okay?* His hands tighten on Santi, itching for more pain.

But Hobie studies Miles for several long seconds, then slouches with an elbow up on the back of the seat. “Fine.”

Miles lets him go and shoves him away.

Santi stumbles like a foal, trembling. Shock. He cradles his own arm and straightens his shirt. Blood drips over his mouth. “Whatever, man. I don’t give a fuck anymore.” He turns, walking away through the parting crowd, like all the stress he’s given Miles was nothing to him. All the sleepless nights the guy has caused when he wasn’t even worth it.

Hating anyone is unfamiliar, like a poison in his system that shuts off his equilibrium. His fists clench. He stares at Santi’s back, imagining spinning him around and punching his face in. Imagining the surprise in his eyes. Miles has never been fucking *weak* and he’s angry at himself for allowing himself to be turned into, into—

Hobie is in front of him.

Hobie looks delighted by what he sees.

Hobie is saying something.

Miles shakes his head without listening, fingers twitching. “I’m fine, man, I’m cool.”

“Really?”

Miles nods, looking at his surroundings instead. The crowd is beginning to disperse as Gwen and Pav urges them away. The nearby tables are picking up their conversations.

Hobie is saying something again.

“Huh?”

Hobie gently takes his chin and makes Miles look at him. “Rage looks good on you, darling.”

Miles shakes his head. Not helpful. “Hobie.” Maybe he can work out some of this energy on some criminals instead.

Hobie gets behind him and rubs his shoulders. “But as much as I’d love to watch, you’re in no condition for a fight right now. Not after two burgers and fries and a mild concussion.”

“Hobie.” He half-heartedly tries to escape his grip and fails as it turns hard as iron.

“So what we're gonna do is *relax*.”

“*Hobie*.”

“Trust me. It’s over, you did it, and I’ll send you the video so you can watch it over and over.” He chuckles. “I know I will. Spank-bank material.”

That works a slight smile out of Miles. Hobie keeps rubbing his shoulders and Miles finds himself sitting in his chair with Hobie standing behind him. Turns out he gives pretty nice backrubs; who knew?

Miles mumbles, slouched now, “Did I look cool?”

“Really cool.”

“Can we be boyfriends? Or uh, partners?”

Hobie’s hands falter for only half a second before continuing on. He bends down, kisses his cheek, and murmurs in his ear, “After that display? I’d be honored.”

Pav returns, looking between them with heart eyes. “I really hate to break this up, but they’re kicking us out.”

Of course. Miles stands and takes Hobie’s vest, sliding it on.

“Oh, and I got a picture of us terrorizing him!” Pav turns his phone around.

It’s a selfie, of Pav smiling in the front and holding up a peace sign as Miles smashes Santi into the table, with Hobie’s proud grin and Gwen looking shocked.

Pav says, “It’s my new screensaver.”

Hobie throws an arm over Miles’ shoulder and the other over Pav’s. “Send that one to me, mate.”

“All of us,” Gwen corrects, joining them with her bag on her shoulder. The table is clear. “Ready to go?”

Hobes: miles_beating_the_shit_out_of_undershirt.mov

Hobes: gather round new movie dropped

*Gwendy: *grabs popcorn**

sunflower: guysss

Pav: WAIT IM FIGTIN SMEONE I WANNA SDEE

Hobes: hurry up it's all set up

Hobes: and send that selfie you took

Pav: beef_in_diner.jpg

sunflower: omw

The tv is off. The floor is stacked with pillows and empty snack bags. Pav and Gwen have left, and Miles is curled into Hobie's chest.

Miles whispers, daring to break the peaceful silence, "Hobie?"

"Hm?"

"D'ythink his arm's healing okay?"

Hobie kisses his head. "We can go find him and break it again."

"Hobes, I... I did it out of hate. Protective hate. Last time I felt that was..."

The collider. Kingpin. *Making him pay.*

Miles sighs. "He hurt someone I love and I went blank, a-and what if I do that again? What if I'm becoming... unhinged?" He presses his face harder into Hobie's chest.

"You're not."

"How are you so sure?"

"Because, love, it wasn't without cause. He was out of line. And plenty have punched their asshole partners."

"Yeah, but *I* could've killed him. In the moment, if I shoved his face a little harder."

"You didn't."

"I could've."

"We all could've. That's my point." Hobie lifts his chin. "But you didn't. An active choice of self-control."

His next words spill out. "What if that control snaps? I-I'm only human."

Hobie gives him a long, analyzing look. Finally, he says, "I would've stopped you. I did stop you. And if it weren't me, then it would've been Pav or Gwen. Or Peter." He reaches over and picks up Miles' phone from the floor. "We're here for you, love, and I think I can speak for all of us when I

say none of us want you doing something you'll regret forever. You aren't alone."

Miles can't look away from him.

"Alright?"

"I love you."

Hobie's eyes widen, his face going slack.

Miles burns. "I'm sorry. *Shoot*, I'm sorry. You don't need to say it back. Uh. Wow. I kinda just ruined things didn't I?"

Hobie kisses him, a gentle one with a hand behind his neck. He mumbles against Miles' lips, "You know how long I've wanted to say that?" He kisses him again. "'Course you beat me to it." And again, longer this time. "I love you too, Miles. With everything."

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